

Approved For Release 2004/10/28 : CIA-RDP80R01720R000800070001-2

15 May 1973

SAVA 73-79

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Personal Observations

1. You asked at the 15 May WSAG if I had any last minute thoughts or suggestions. I do have a few, but did not feel that was the time, place or atmosphere in which to raise them. I am, hence, forwarding them privately via this personal note.

2. First, two cautionary observations.

a. I am ignorant of any private dialogue you may have had with the Soviets and/or Chinese on the matter of future aid (theirs) to North Vietnam. Nothing in the information that is available to me, however, leads me to think that, in a crunch, either the Soviets or the Chinese would be willing to actually tighten, or threaten to tighten, the aid screw enough to dissuade the Politburo from undertaking military adventures in the south that the latter felt necessary to preserve and enhance the Party's political prospects below the 17th Parallel.

b. I may be wrong (it would not be the first time, or the last) but I am convinced the Politburo currently regards potential U.S. aid to North Vietnam as cake frosting. It would be very nice to have, but is not (by their calculus) worth paying much of a

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behavioral price for, particularly since Congress may sandbag it anyway. As you well know Le Duc Tho and his associates pay more attention to sticks than carrots. With the bombing stopped, minimal northern equities are protected and the Politburo's appetite for the meat and potatoes of an enhanced position in the south is far stronger than its appetite for the carrot of U.S. economic aid to the north.

3. Second, you hold at least two high cards.

a. One is the GVN's real, and improving, solidity and strength. Thieu's firm control of most of South Vietnam's population (and populated areas), his military ability to cope handily with the post-January levels (and types) of Communist pressures, and the fact that his government's stability shows no sign whatsoever of fraying around the edges (let alone unravelling) in the post-Agreement environment -- these are the things that send the Politburo up the wall.

b. The other is the fact that the Politburo's members believe (and feel they have learned by experience) that President Nixon is unpredictable and capable of anything. Whatever they may be telling themselves about the foreign policy constraints imposed by recent U.S. domestic developments, however much they may be assuring themselves that this time (really) his hands are tied -- they cannot be sure. This uncertainty is their area of vulnerability, for if you take a bland tough line, they may think it a bluff but will be very reluctant to call it.

4. I suspect one of Le Duc Tho's main objects is to see if he can get us to pressure the GVN into taking actions that open up opportunities the Communists have not been able to develop by

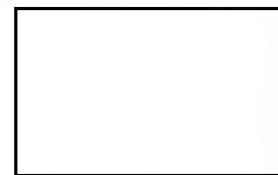
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their own efforts (in the process putting more grit in the gears of our relations with Saigon). The counter to which Le Duc Tho and his colleagues -- despite inevitable surface bluster -- would probably be most receptive would be the line that President Nixon is not an infinitely patient man and his nerves have been drawn out very fine by the whole pattern of Hanoi's post-January behavior. (You do not need to say that recent domestic events have done nothing to improve his disposition, but it would help if that thought could be obliquely floated.) Unless that pattern of behavior changes and North Vietnam begins living up to its agreed obligations, this very finite supply of patience will soon be exhausted. Furthermore, our GVN allies, already more than restless, cannot be expected to sit tight forever in the face of a Communist military buildup already equivalent to that of March 1972. We have urged and encouraged them to keep their part of the 27 January bargain, which (substantially) they have done, but we live in the real world and know they have to also.

5. In sum, Hanoi has its problems, we have leverage. Hanoi cannot be sure what the limits of that leverage may be, and it knows that finding out the hard way can be a painful process. Thus the picture is not anything like so bleak as some of the comments around the WSAG table might have led one to infer.

6. That I wish you all the best goes without saying. If there is anything more that we can do to help, you have only to ask.



O/DCI/SAVA:GACarver/mee
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VIETNAMESE AFFAIRS STAFF
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
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DATE: 17 May 1973

TO: The Director

FROM: George A. Carver, Jr.

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

1. When General Scowcroft called me at home last night (16 May) he did -- as I reported at the 17 May Executive Committee Meeting -- convey thanks and appreciation for the various papers we had sent down over the past week. What I did not mention at the meeting (for obvious reasons) was that he also made a particular point of conveying Henry's thanks for the personal note I sent him the evening of the 15th, which Scowcroft said Henry read carefully, liked and put in his pocket to take with him to Paris. You glanced at a handwritten draft of that note before concurring in my sending it. Attached is the full typed (i. e. legible) text as it was sent.

2. I am sending copies of this note to (and only to) yourself, General Walters and Mr. Colby.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

cc: General Walters
Mr. Colby

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